

of farmers and increase the prices of foods and agricultural materials such as timber. Drought adversely impacts our environment and wildlife habitats, taking away from our public lands and recreational opportunities, which have become an essential component of the way of life for many western communities.

But while the Department of Homeland Security, is working to prepare for natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes, the federal government is not doing enough to mitigate and reduce the effects of drought.

Currently, NOAA works with several agencies to produce drought forecasts and monitoring. However, a report by the Western Governors' Association found that much of the current drought forecasting information is overly technical and not in a standard format. Many users also are not aware of resources available to reduce the impacts of drought.

The bill that Mr. Hall and I are introducing today responds to those problems by expanding NOAA's efforts in drought monitoring and forecasting, improving the dissemination of data to ensure more informed and effective decisions are made about drought.

Specifically, the bill establishes an early warning system called NIDIS. NIDIS will integrate information from key indicators of drought to provide timely assessments. NIDIS will be used to disseminate a drought forecast on a regular basis to decision makers on the federal, state, local, and tribal levels, as well as to the private and public sectors.

Real-time data is often the most helpful in making decisions about drought; however, data is rarely available to decisions makers until after the fact. Thus, NIDIS will provide real-time data where possible for regional and local drought conditions.

Our bill also calls for the coordination and integration of federal research to support NIDIS, thus ensuring that we continue to understand droughts and their impacts. Lastly, our bill directs NOAA to consult and coordinate with other federal agencies in the development of NIDIS to ensure that all appropriate communities benefit from the system.

I believe that NIDIS will ensure that we are able to proactively reduce the effects of drought and allow decision makers to take advantage of all opportunities to reduce as many impacts as possible. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support the creation of NIDIS and better monitoring and forecasting of drought.

#### THE CONGRESSIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL MAKES A DIFFERENCE

**HON. SAM JOHNSON**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 6, 2006*

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, when you think of the leaders of the future—what qualities come to mind? Civic activism? Community awareness? Personal leadership? Academic excellence? It is a privilege to recognize the members of the 2005–2006 Congressional Youth Advisory Council because they embody these qualities and more.

For the last 2 years, the members of the Congressional Youth Advisory Council have

represented the young people of the Third District well by working as ambassadors of the future. Several times a year the members of the Youth Council would share a valuable youth perspective on the current issues before Congress. This year 42 students from public, private, and home schools in grades 10 through 12 made their voices heard and made a difference to Congress.

For the first time, this year there was a philanthropy element to the Youth Council. For the community service project, the members of the Youth Council reached out to veterans and encouraged them to share their stories. Called the "Preserving History Project," each member had to interview a veteran. Then the student had to submit a lengthy paper detailing the veteran's service and sharing what the student learned from that experience. The students submitted a summary of their work. Today I'm proud to submit the briefs provided so the hard and valuable work of the Youth Council may be preserved for antiquity in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Someday, each member will be able to share with children and grandchildren—"In high school I served my community and my work will always be recognized in the official CONGRESSIONAL RECORD."

A copy of each submitted student summary follows.

To each member of the Congressional Youth Advisory Council, thank you for your time, effort and sacrifice to help make the Congressional Youth Advisory Council a success. You are the voices of the future and I salute you. God bless you and God bless America.

My name is Lauren Huber and I had the great opportunity to interview my grandfather, Second Lieutenant Robert W. Jensen. My grandfather was a bombardier pilot in World War II. He has accomplished a lot in his lifetime and has survived being a prisoner of war, and living on barely anything. He has received many medals for his service in World War II, including: the Oakleaf Medal Cluster, Air Medal, and a Purple Heart. It was a pleasure and an honor to interview my grandfather and listen to what he had to say about his experience as a bombardier in WWII. I have learned a great deal about my grandfather I did not know, such as his strength. I have learned that conditions were horrible during the war and that many innocent people were killed because of WWII. I now have even deeper respect for not only my grandfather, but for all the veterans of every war in the world. I have a deeper gratitude for the soldiers who are currently fighting in Iraq and honor them with all my heart. I am very lucky to have known my grandfather long enough for him to tell his war stories for me, and I will be sure his legacy will live on in me and in the stories that I will tell my children and grandchildren of Robert W. Jensen.—Lauren Huber

Carl Eugene Beck, my grandfather, is an American veteran who relied on determination and dedication as he proudly served in the Navy during the Korean War. Carl finished the Navy as an aviation mechanic third class. Mr. Beck's experience in the Navy greatly allowed him to mature because, as he states, this was his first time to be independent. The Navy also matured Mr. Beck through discipline and hard work, all that he is thankful to have acquired. Finally, in the work field, the Navy provided Carl with a strong work ethic and an education that Carl states allowed him to keep his job. Thanks to the G.I. Bill, Mr. Beck was also able to have financial advantages not

only in his education, but also later in life, such as when he bought his first house. Overall, the Navy taught Carl to be self-sufficient and gave him motivation to work hard in college and in life. Although Carl never actually fought, the very fact that he voluntarily joined the military, to me, is something that anyone should be proud of. Even though he came from a poor family, Carl's dedication and determination ultimately led to his successes in the Navy, as well as later in life.—Patrick Dyer

George William Wallis served during World War II in the 96th, 69th, and 3rd Infantry divisions. The Army gave him a battlefield commission in which he became a Second Lieutenant. Wallis was stationed primarily in Germany where his division gradually moved from town to town across Germany until it was the first to reach the Russians. George Wallis received an Air Medal, a European Theatre Ribbon, and two battle stars for his service. In addition to these tangibles, Wallis gained an increased level of maturity and a greater sense of teamwork and responsibility as a direct result of being in our Armed Forces.

Oftentimes the media, as well as many others, portray the military in a negative light. Because of this, I developed a somewhat faulty image of what life in the military was like. As opposed to hearing horror stories about cruel sergeants, rampant diseases, and lack of food, Wallis told me generally positive accounts of tough but kind sergeants, adequate food, and pretty decent conditions. My discussions with George Wallis helped to change my somewhat myopic view of military life, and it allowed me to gain a greater sense of what it was like to live let alone fight during a war that engulfed the entirety of the world.—Alyssa DeLorenz

I interviewed Private First Class Leo Serian. Leo Serian was drafted from New York into the Army in 1943 as part of the last company of soldiers to be shipped across to Europe where they advanced farther than any other company in WWII and ultimately liberated the concentration camp, Hersbruck. Although not a Christian during the war, Serian now looks back and believes the Lord held him in His hands during his whole enlistment. This includes many miracles like near misses by machine guns, to safe crossings of minefields, and even his placement in his company. For Serian, his experience in World War II was truly unforgettable, and he now resides in Dallas, Texas. Being devoted to Christ, Serian blended his faith with his war experiences in the poems he wrote, which are included in the essay.—Austin Lutz

Tony Brigham attended Sunset High School in South Oak Cliff and graduated in 1969. In 1971, at the young age of 20, he sought a future in the military. Before he got drafted for the Vietnam War, he decided to join the Air Force. He was stationed on the island of Okinawa for the majority of his time in the United States Air Force, and he experienced unforgettable moments while over there. He played a leading role in Operation BabyLift, as he coordinated the special flights coming into Hawaii. He is proud of his role helping infants and newborn children escape the perils of Vietnam. As it happened, many of the soldiers formed anti-Vietnam War opinions. Tony Brigham was one of those soldiers who enlisted with one opinion, which soon changed during his time of service. Seven years later, Tony retired from the Air Force. He decided to attend Eastlandsburg St. Pennsylvania College, Steven F. Austin University, and the University of Texas at Dallas, all on the G.I. Bill. He received two undergraduate degrees, a B.S. in Environmental Science and in Forestry, and one graduate degree in Science

Education. He applies all this knowledge in the classroom where he has been teaching for the past 22 years of his life.—Michael McCleary

I interviewed Chief Warrant Officer Jarvis W. Coburn, U.S. Army (Ret.). He served his country from 1965 through 1969. During his time in uniform, he served in the 176th Aviation Company of I Corps in the Vietnam War. He flew both lift and attack helicopters and received numerous awards and citations, including two Purple Hearts, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, thirty-nine air medals, one Presidential Unit Citation, and one Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. Several times he was in life and death situations, and each time he managed to find a way through. He experienced the thrill of fighting alongside the United States Marine Corps and the agony of losing fellow soldiers in horrific battle. He returned to the United States, became a flight instructor and taught the next generation of Army pilots. His work in the private sector with Ross Perot's EDS led to the heroic rescue of two captured American prisoners as recorded in Ken Follett's *On Wings of Eagles*.

After interviewing Mr. Coburn, I gained a newfound respect, not only for the man himself, but also for all the soldiers that have served our country. Listening to the stories he shared with me reinforced how important the Armed Forces are to our Nation.—J. Andrew Clark

For the Preserving History: Veteran's Interview Project, I had the opportunity to interview a veteran of World War II. My grandfather, Michael Pessalano, was the veteran who shared his personal experiences with me. This man accomplished a lot in my eyes. He was a Codman in the United States Navy during World War II. He was awarded three ribbons: the American European Theater and Victory medal, and the American and European medals from serving overseas. Although he didn't see much combat, hearing his stories were still really interesting. Just by serving in the U.S. armed service I believe that you have been able to accomplish a lot. Having the determination, strength, risks taken, and dedication to one's country will vastly benefit anyone who serves. After having the opportunity to interview and hear the personal story of one's experience, I was shown the truth. Many people today, including myself, are clueless on what a soldier's life is really like. From this interview experience, I have learned to have more pride in my country, respect the people who are fighting for me, and we need to preserve the history so others can see the reality to how and who got our country where it is today.—Ashlea Banick

For this project I interviewed Captain Rick Burges. Captain Burges served in the Marine Corps of the United States of America from 1980 to 1984. He was positioned in artillery at Camp Le Jeune in North Carolina. Although he was never a part of combat or enlisted during a time of declared war, Captain Burges established himself as a Marine Corps hero by selflessly serving and climbing up the ranks for four years. This was an opportunity to open my mind up to the rigors of war and military training. Captain Burges was able to explain how military training is very long, hard, and tedious, but it also provides the greatest sense of satisfaction. But the greatest lesson is that I must always fulfill my dreams, no matter how hard or tiresome it may be, because only then can I live life completely satisfied.—Hansini Sharma

I interviewed my grandfather, Bentley Byrd Hinman. He served in the United States Army for two years as a Master Sergeant between the years of 1950 and 1952. During that time the United States was involved in the Korean War. My grandfather, however, was

far removed from any field of combat. He spent the majority of his service in Germany serving as a superintendent for a collecting station, the place where the wounded were brought after battle. He was not exactly the definition of a war hero; in fact, he never even fought a battle. That fact, however, does nothing to demean the sacrifice he made. When he was drafted for the military in 1950, he was not anxious or excited to go. It was simply something that must be done, so he went. He traveled to Germany for two years performing a thankless job, but he fulfilled his duty and that is all we can ask. I discovered what many men serving our country feel like. Oftentimes, men are not required to enter battle but are simply called. That calling is duty and the men who are strong enough to hear its call and answer are the true heroes.—Jennifer Smart

I interviewed Captain Andrew George Schneider, formerly of the United States Navy Supply Corps. Mr. Schneider joined the Navy voluntarily during the Korean War. He served first on the USS *Elderado* as a seaman recruit. Later, he transferred to a Navy destroyer, the USS *Watts*, where he was a Lieutenant (junior grade). Only in his early twenties, he was a Supply Officer and head of the supply department. After several years of active duty, Andrew joined the reserves where he remained on alert status for 22 years. During that time he worked with classified missile plans and as a government auditor. In 1979, he retired after 29 years of service. I learned a lot about Mr. Schneider through this project. I never knew what he had done in the Navy, and I found his story particularly interesting because Andrew Schneider is my grandfather. He is a true hero!—Kristin Schneider

Mr. Johnson is dedicated to God, his country and his family. He has lived the story of a POW war hero that had determination to survive. He made his way back to Texas and his family. During the time of Mr. Johnson's captivity, Mrs. Johnson never believed that her husband was dead. Two years after he had been shot down she received evidence to prove that he was still alive. She has said that her main goal was to keep continuity in the children's lives, while her husband was away. Many supporters and friends offered her prayers of hope and wore Mr. Johnson's POW bracelet in his honor. The bracelet told the prisoner of wars' name and rank and date captured. My family was among those who did so, and they all remember the day Mrs. Johnson received the message of her husband being shot down and missing in action and then when she had heard that he was coming home.

Sam Johnson is a decorated hero. He has earned 2 Silver Hearts, 2 Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star with Valor, the Meritorious Service Medal, and 9 other medals, including 2 Purple Hearts, as written in his book. He now serves his country as a United States Congressman. I am very thankful to have heard his story because it made my understanding of past war history even greater. Although I was not alive at the time, I can empathize and only imagine how horrible Mr. Johnson was treated as a captive prisoner. I gain strength in my Faith through the telling of his life story, and I admire all of his accomplishments.—Amanda Lipscomb

As part of the "Preserving History Project" I completed for Congressman Sam Johnson and the Congressional Youth Advisory Council, I had the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Bud Taylor who served in World War II as a Navy seaman. His exploits in the Pacific theater included the attack on Pearl Harbor, the bombardment of the Aleutian Island chain, and minesweeping at Bikini Atoll and around Japan. Upon being

transferred to the Atlantic theater, he was assigned to a convoy escort destroyer and participated in D-Day at Normandy. Mr. Taylor joined the Navy in 1940 as a sailor, rose to Seaman's 2nd Class, Seaman's 1st Class, and eventually his final rank of Gunner's Mate 3rd Class. As a result of this interview with Mr. Taylor, I saw how some of the men in the U.S. Armed Forces in Pearl Harbor fought against the odds to protect our country and the freedoms we enjoy in the U.S. I was confronted with how men gave their lives and Herculean efforts to protect America. My interview with Mr. Taylor opened my eyes to the privilege of serving in the U.S. Armed Forces; that in the time of need, we must all be ready to serve.—Michael Scott

Private First Class, George C. Powell was a member of the field artillery unit of the 66th Black Panther Division of the United States Army during World War II. Powell was born on November 6, 1924 in McKinney, Texas and was drafted by the U.S. military by the time he was eighteen. Upon completion of his training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Powell was sent to the European Theater of Operations, where his unit was engaged in the campaign on Northern France, where he fought until the end of the war in 1945. As part of the Baker 2 firing battery of the 66th field artillery unit, Powell was involved in several successes and achievements, namely the sinking of a German submarine. As a veteran of World War II Powell was able to serve his country and the United States of America, which is indeed his biggest accomplishment of all.

From this interview, I have gained so much more respect for the people who serve this country, as they truly understand the value of freedom. I have also come to realize the importance and the gift of living in a country where my rights are protected, and some day I hope to pass this on to others to make them realize the values of such a nation as the United States of America.—Morgan Bailey

## RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER

SPEECH OF

**HON. CHARLES H. TAYLOR**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 4, 2006

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I would like to commend my colleagues on the Committee on International Relations for their work on House Resolution 703, which recognizes the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. I strongly support this resolution, which serves as an important reminder of the work yet to be done to ensure a better future for people living in parts of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, and other areas, who have been affected by the disaster.

As the resolution makes clear, the United States must continue its work with other countries and international organizations to provide assistance to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. At the same time, as the resolution points out, it is also imperative that we support research into the public health consequences of the disaster so that the international community might benefit from the findings of such research.

It is in this spirit that I would like to recognize the Chernobyl Research and Service